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7 May 1980

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 16/80)



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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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CONTENTS

INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

Libyan Efforts To Dislodge Bourguiba To Continue (Souhayr Belhassen; JEUNE AFRIQUE, 27 Feb 80).....	1
Qadhdhafi's Popularity in Tunisia Said Plummeting (Abdelazia Barouhi; JEUNE AFRIQUE, 27 Feb 80).....	4
International Ramifications of Proposed PDRY-YAR Unity Discussed (AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 29 Feb-6 Mar 80).....	6

EGYPT

Egyptian Opposition Abroad Analyzed (AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 14-20 Mar 80).....	12
--	----

MAURITANIA

Additional Details on CNPF Delegation's Visit (MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS, 7 Mar 80).....	24
---	----

Briefs

FAO Fish Resources Agreement	26
CNPF Delegation's Visit	26
Tea Shortages Combated	26
Koundi Agro-Industrial Complex Studied	26
Measures Against Unauthorized Construction	27
Japanese Guelbs Project Loan	27
Iraqi Aid	27

SYRIA

Reactions to Recent Events Analyzed (AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 4-10 Apr 80).....	28
- a -	[III - NE & A - 121 FOUO]

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CONTENTS (Continued)

Domestic Unrest, Government's Reaction Analyzed (AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI, 21-27 Mar 80).....	34
WESTERN SAHARA	
Paris Magazine Views Potential Sahara Fighting (JEUNE AFRIQUE, 9 Apr 80).....	40

- b -

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

LIBYAN EFFORTS TO DISLODGE BOURGUIBA TO CONTINUE

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 27 Feb 80 pp 36-37

[Article by Souhayr Belhassen: "It Isn't Over"]

[Text] Although the "Amr Ibn el-Ass brigade" was ready to attack Gafsa during the night of 26-27 January (J.A. No. 997), an entirely different type of commando force was sent across the Gulf of Gabes by Qadhdhafi. Escorted by units of the Libyan navy, an oil drilling rig was installed about 100 kilometers north of Zuwarah and approximately 120 kilometers east of Jerba. In the area of the Tunisian-Libyan continental shelf which has been a subject of contention between the two countries for many years. The rig and its naval escort, which may even have violated Tunisian territorial waters, was still in place at the end of February.

"Irreversible Opposition"

This is certainly not the first time that Colonel Qadhdhafi used such methods to revive his claims to the continental shelf. But the date selected for the operation gives another dimension to the affair, which is one more link in the very peculiar war that Qadhdhafi intends to deliver to Tunisia. Didn't he say, on 18 February, in the extreme left-wing Paris daily, LIBERATION, that the events of Gafsa marked the "beginning of the end" for the Tunisian regime, adding: "From now on, our opposition is irreversible."

The rig, which is floating in the open sea in the Gulf of Gabes, belongs to the Norwegian company, Morland Off Shore AS, whose headquarters is in Oslo. Semi-submersible, it can accommodate between 50 and 80 people, and its rental amounts to approximately \$45,000 per day (9 million FCFA). It was leased by the Middle East North Africa Petroleum Company, in which Libya owns the majority of the capital (51 percent as opposed to 49 percent by the AGIP [National Italian Oil Co], a subsidiary of the Italian National Hydrocarbon Company, ENI).

Qadhdhafi's objectives in this operation are purely political. Because the disputed zone has very large oil reserves. Some sources estimate that

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they are capable of quintupling Tunisian production, which is presently nearly 5 million tons per year, making it the leading export station (40 percent of the total value of sales to foreign countries).

Therefore, the stakes are sizable, and the greed with which Tunisians and Libyans have been claiming this area since 1970 is easily understood. However, on 26 August 1976, they accepted the principle of arbitration from the International Court of Justice (CIJ) in The Hague. But in February 1977, Libya sent the first rig into the contested waters. It was removed at the beginning of May, as a result of Tunisian protests, then replaced by another.

Tense Atmosphere

On 28 May, they were on the brink of a naval confrontation. Fortunately, the worst was avoided since both parties ultimately preferred the negotiating table. On 10 June, a compromise agreement was signed on the appeal of the CIJ. Tunisia gave her consent to The Hague on 1 December 1978 and Libya on 14 February 1979. A new rig (the third) in August 1979. It was to operate for several weeks. No reaction from Tunis. For the fourth, in January 1980, Prime Minister Hedi Nouira took action before the National Assembly of 13 February. He informed the deputies that the government had lodged a protest against this Libyan "provocation."

Was Qadhdhafi trying to block the regulations agreed upon before the CIJ? It was provided that both parties were obliged to refrain from any action or activity which could aggravate the dispute. Actions which, in another respect, had no legal validity. Qadhdhafi hadn't respected that agreement. Was he also going to fail to keep the others?

Both countries had to file a report before 31 May, and a second document must be presented by Tunisia before 30 November 1980 and by Libya before 31 January 1981. Only then will they be able to begin the public arguments before the tribunal which is presided over by British Sir Humphrey Waldock, president of the CIJ.

For the time being, the presence of the Norwegian rig is nourishing the tense atmosphere which seems to be growing worse. In fact, in the South, large military forces have taken up positions here and there along the frontier. Skirmishes have taken place, and in the government offices at Medenine, a Libyan foray over 8 km was reported. Unidentified planes have flown over Tunisian territory. Fears of new aggression (by land or by sea) are being reinforced.

Internally, attention is turned toward the returning emigres who continue to pour in and to center around the university. Since reopening (11 February), the campus in Tunis has been the scene of sporadic strikes and violent confrontations, especially between the integrationists and the "democratic patriots"--combining several small groups from the extreme left who

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echo the sentiments of Radio-Tripoli. "Gafsa is only the beginning," proclaim the posters denouncing "the French presence" and the imperialist interference in the internal affairs of the country. The declared goal of the activists is to paralyze the university to "sustain the people's revolution in Gafsa."

Being afraid to pay the costs of putting things in order, the integrationist students, who had officially condemned "the aggression at Gafsa," violently opposed their comrades, and on 13 February, some were wounded. Of the 100 or so students who were involved, two were brought before the courts. But on 18 February, an official statement was posted in the faculties [departments] of the university. If the students did not return to classes by 19 February, they were threatened with being deprived of their scholarships, and of access to university canteens and residence halls, and with being excluded from examinations for the session, which will be held in June.

Libyan Manipulation

The next day, Tuesday the 19th, there was a meeting of the students and intervention by the forces for order within the university. Several dozen students were involved in altercations. Result: on Wednesday the 20th, the strike spread throughout the university. Since Radio-Tripoli announced, even before the end of the university vacation, that the students would not return to class, some people thought they saw a Libyan manipulation of student youths in this coincidence. According to a highly placed source, however, the university fever will drop when the Gafsa affair is settled in Tunisia. That is, when the 110 accused parties have been brought before the National Security Court.

Naming of the magistrates who will compose the court should not be delayed. It will be presided over by Bechir Jedidi, advisor to the Supreme Court of Appeal, who will fill this role for the first time. Abdelmajid Bouslama, former director of the Surete, advisor to the Supreme Court of Appeals, and prosecutor in the trial of Ben Salah, will also be the prosecutor in this matter. The accused will be defended by 70 attorneys of various [political] inclinations, since the majority of the families did not name a defense lawyer.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

QADHDHAFI'S POPULARITY IN TUNISIA SAID PLUMMETING

Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 27 Feb 80 p 37

[Article by Abdelaziz Barouhi: "A Little Boy"]

[Text] In the early 70's, Mu'ammarr Qadhdhafi was popular in Bourguiba's Tunisia. He was young and handsome. In spite of his verbal audacities, he defended values to which a goodly number of Tunisians were devoted. Businessmen and politicians courted the Libyan leader. During his two most notable visits, to Tunis in 1972 and to Quairouan in March 1975, he received a welcome which was, to say the very least, warm (even after the aborted union "strike" at Jerba, 12 January 1974).

But since then, the popularity of the man who was called "brother" has followed a descending curve. To begin with, his behavior wounded the dignity of the Tunisians. There were repeated expulsions and strong-arm tactics were used against workers living in Libya, to which were added insulting comments about the habits of Tunisians and the practice of black-mail, which consisted of offering subsidies in petrodollars in exchange for political concessions.

Then, Tunisian public opinion was outraged by the fact that Qadhdhafi was contending with Tunisia for the petroleum deposits in the Gulf of Gabes, even though his own country has an overabundance of oil. Not to mention the commando force sent to Tunis from Libya in 1976 to "remove or assassinate" Prime Minister Hedi Nouira.

In spite of everything, Qadhdhafi still enjoyed a fair amount of popularity in Tunisia. The first results of a poll taken by JEUNE AFRIQUE before the "Gafsa coup" show that he was still popular with nearly 10 percent of our Tunisian readers. By unleashing the "Amr Ibn el-Ass brigade" against Gafsa, and by again expelling their compatriots, Qadhdhafi has finally angered the Tunisians, now almost unanimously, in spite of their internal squabbles, to the point of rejecting his "hegemonism."

"We do not have to learn lessons of Arabism, Islamism or democracy from Qadhdhafi," says an average Tunisian citizen, who until then had regarded

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the Libyan star performer favorably. "Our workers are not cattle," added a union member. For many Tunisians, the name Qadhdhafi has become synonymous with devil. Blinded by his global dreams, the Libyan "guide" has forgotten that a revolution cannot be exported, especially to Tunisia, where national feeling is strong, and where there is no resemblance to the Chadian mosaic.

A little boy, in a fit of temper, kicking a world globe and repeating: "The whole world is against me...but I don't care. No one understands me!" Today, this would be a caricature of Qadhdhafi as Tunisians see him after the Gafsa operation.

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INTER-ARAB AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL RAMIFICATIONS OF PROPOSED PDRY-YAR UNITY DISCUSSED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 29 Feb-6 Mar 80 pp 34-35

[Article filed by our reporter in San'a': "Washington and Moscow Stick Their Fingers into the Shifting Sands of Yemen: San'a's Wooing Aden Stirs American Jealousy"]

[Text] The banners of unity which Aden and San'a' have suddenly raised have alarmed the Americans who for the first time had plunged into the shifting sands of Yemen. Meanwhile, certain Arab quarters have not expressed great apprehension. This is due to the fact that they know it would be easier to rebuild the Ma'rib Dam than to forge a union between the twin nations of Yemen.

What's happening in the two Yemens?

Does no one know? Are the two sister nations heading for unity as the discussions, meetings and declarations seem to suggest?

Can unity be realized between the Marxist state which is bound by a treaty of friendship and cooperation to the Soviet Union, and which holds a seat in the Eastern Bloc economic organization COMECON, and the state with a conservative regime, free economy, and powerful Bedouin tribes who impose their hegemony on the system, the state, and the society?

Is it possible for the two armies which fought one another a year ago to be united? Will the North accept the leadership of the South and its president, 'Abd-al-Fattah Isma'il, a scion of the National Front, which through his thought and commitment became the military base of Yemeni Marxism? Or will the South accept the leadership of the North and its president, 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih, a product of the traditional military establishment?

If a union between the two sister nations were possible, could it be possible between the discordant and mutually antagonistic ideologies and among the numerous conflicting loyalties?

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The observer here is at a loss amidst the dust stirred up around the question of unity between the two countries, and with regard to San'a's relationship with Moscow, Riyadh, and Washington. In the middle of all this he finds only that the succession of events might be analyzed by extreme simplification; he leaves to the visible or distant future to determine what will happen next. It is difficult to predict, henceforth, what will take place amid the shifting sands of Yemen into which the feet of many Arabs and foreigners have sunk during recent decades.

The discussions and communications which took place recently between San'a and the National Democratic Front [NDF] have led to an agreement of cooperation. This includes a number of basic articles summarized by Mr Sultan Ahmad 'Umar, leader of the Front, as follows:

The formation of a coalition government; the implementation of free elections; the issuance of a new constitution; the enactment of political and trade unionist freedoms; the affirmation of the need for developing the country and building a national economy on the basis of its emancipation from dependency.

In the foreign arena, the agreement embraces a policy of non-alignment, commercial dealings with governments or causes on the basis of equality and mutual respect, and the non-interference in internal affairs.

The two sides have not made a statement about whether there was a specific time for the execution of the agreement to begin. Nevertheless, the air in San'a is filled with talk of an expected ministerial change in keeping with what was agreed on with the Front.

Will the Agreement Stand?

Still, the agreement as such forms a large question mark as to the possibility of its being applied. The NDF joins radical parties (the Democratic Revolutionary Party, the Labor Party, the Organization of Revolutionary Patriots, the Popular Vanguard Party, the Union of Democratic Peoples), in addition to educated and Bedouin elements, as well. All of these stand far to the left of the regime. In fact they battled alongside the South Yemeni forces when they crossed the border in March of last year and hoisted their revolutionary banners in the "liberated" frontier zones. Stranger and perhaps more unusual than this was the fact that the announcement of the agreement between San'a and the NDF was preceded, accompanied and followed by seemingly feverish activity in the talks between San'a and Aden towards the achievement of unity between the two countries, including the unification of the armed forces.

The bilateral talks come in implementation of the Kuwait Agreement between the two Yemeni presidents on the achievement of unity. This was a revival of previous agreements on this matter, none of which were implemented in view of the political and ideological differences and the continual changes of regimes in the two countries.

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Most observers here do not expect the Kuwait Agreement to be more fortunate than the previous agreements, especially as it is not possible to overcome the ideological disparity between the two regimes, even though some factions in San'a' want unity.

Then why the affirmation from both sides on the question of unity? Here the observer must return, to a certain extent, to the events and developments which followed the battle last March.

American-Soviet Rivalry

The United States hastened to present the regime of President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih with a deal for arms and equipment in the amount of \$390 million, and Saudi Arabia promised to finance it. The goal was to bolster the North Yemeni forces so they would be enabled to confront any sudden attack or large scale penetration from the South.

The deal included 12 F-5E fighter-bombers, these being equivalent in capability to the Soviet MiG-21 jets. Also included were 90 M-60 tanks, and a like number of M-113 armored personnel carriers. Arriving with the first installment of these arms was a number of American military experts and advisers, possibly amounting to 70 in all, to train the Yemeni forces in their use.

Suddenly the Americans sensed the sands shifting beneath them. There began arriving in the country Soviet planes and ships unloading freight of arms and equipment. Along with these came Soviet experts and advisers whose number American sources have estimated to be 100.

When the Soviet arms and equipment poured forth in such a remarkable fashion the Americans queried the Yemeni officials concerned. They replied: "Why the alarm? We signed a similar military agreement with the Soviet Union, and we are free to choose and diversify our sources of armament."

Indeed, arms are always the passport of the great powers to the lesser nations. Just when Washington thought it had gained a foothold for itself in San'a', it was surprised to learn the Soviets had a foothold there as well. Thus American hopes were dashed in the continuation of the game with the Soviets on the edge of the strategic Bab al-Mandab, which separates the Red Sea from the Indian Ocean.

It appears that the North Yemenis were disturbed by the propagandistic manner of the announcement of the arms deal and the explanation of it as if it were tantamount to an acceptance of American hegemony. The regime of 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih wishes to continue with the policy of his predecessors Ibrahim Hamdi and Ahmad Ghashmi--the first was assassinated by bullet, the second by explosion--in pursuing a policy of independence and the development of North Yemen with the assistance of all the Arab states, taking into the same consideration the special relationship which ties her to Saudi Arabia on the one hand, and to her sister state, South Yemen, on the other.

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Mr 'Abd-al-'Aziz 'Abd-al-Ghani, the current prime minister, says in regard to this that San'a' wants to pursue non-alignment in both word and deed, and is striving to unite with all sides in good relations.

Saudi Arabia has delayed provisions to pay the remainder of the cost of the American deal pending a clear and frank explanation of two matters: the rapprochement with the Aden regime on one hand, and the deal for Soviet arms on the other.

Nevertheless, relations between the two countries are normal. Mr 'Abd-al-Ghani describes the Saudi aid--nearly half Yemen's budget--as generous, and he calls on the Riyadh government to trust the San'a' regime, acknowledging that what happens in Yemen affects what happens in Saudi Arabia, and vice versa.

But what is San'a's explanation for the Soviet arms deal which puzzles the Americans and angers some Arab quarters?

The military officials concerned say that the American arms deal was not enough, and so they turned to the Soviet Union, as it has been the principle supplier of weaponry to Yemen since 1955. "Our diversifying of the sources of our arms guarantees for us the preservation of a balance in the conflict between the superpowers in our strategic region which controls the maritime oil lanes."

This is the official Yemeni explanation--or semi-official--for some of what is happening in San'a'. Yet the Americans do not appear convinced, and they are trying to force some Arab quarters to bear the responsibility for the transformation in the Yemeni attitude. They consider San'a's desire to pursue its neutrality and non-alignment equivalent to alignment with the Soviets and their allies in Aden.

The Reality as it Appears from the Arab Perspective

What vexes the Americans, however, regarding the Soviet deal, the rapprochement with Aden, and the agreement with the National Democratic Front, which uses Aden as the seat of its activities, does not greatly disturb the countries of the Arabian Gulf. That is because they know perfectly well the truth of the situation in North and South Yemen. They know, for example, that even if the sentiments for unity between the twin nations were strong and genuine, and attributable to a common history, there is a lot that would prevent San'a' from falling prey to the Soviets and their client regime in Aden.

An indication that some of the participating factions in the current regime are clearly expressing their view that unity is impossible in light of the ideological contradictions suffices here.

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The National Grouping, which gathers together a number of prominent leaders like Yahya al-'Arashi, Ahmad Jabir 'Afif, Ahmad Rahumi, and Mujahid Abu-Shawarib (deputy prime minister for domestic affairs), feels that the excessive zeal in official discourse on unity in full from San'a' and Aden is nothing but idle talk, considering the aforementioned contradictions.

Likewise, the powerful tribes, including the Zaydi Hashid and Bakil stationed in the northern districts, are fearful of talk of union with the South. The tribes in Yemen continue to wield great influence by virtue of their manpower, their secure geographical positions, and the arms in their possession, in addition to their training in combat.

There is also the close to one-third million South Yemenis, most of whom are merchants, members of the middle class or tribes who fled from the South after the rise of the Marxist regime. All of these are taken over by severely hostile feelings towards the regime of President 'Abd-al-Fattah Isma'il.

Aden Has its Reservations Too

If the North Yemenis have their apprehensions about unity with Aden, then the Marxist regime has its fears as well. For its part, it is not ready to relinquish its Marxist-Leninist principles for the link, in appearance or in total, with a regime it considers "Bedouin and backward." Likewise, it is not able to redeem itself from commitments of clientage with the Soviet Union, especially now that it has reinforced that clientage recently with a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation.

Indeed, the Soviets have strengthened their near-absolute control over key positions. Estimates reveal that 15,000 foreign troops and experts are stationed in South Yemen. Among these are 8,000 Russians dominating the defense ministry and strategic posts, 1,800 Cubans training the popular militias and piloting the MiG aircraft, and 3,000 East Germans directing the Yemeni intelligence network and its extensions in the Arabian Peninsula in particular and in the Arab sphere in general.

In addition to that, the South Yemeni ports and islands accommodate a Soviet fleet operating in the Indian Ocean which comprises 25 large and small battle units. There are reports not yet confirmed here that two Yemeni divisions have been dispatched to combat in Afghanistan alongside the government and Soviet forces. After all this, is unity possible between the two countries?

Most likely, the renewed talk coming out of Aden and San'a' about unity in full is, in a way, a public auction, a provocation of the concern and jealousy of some Arab quarters, and, in a way, a playing off of the oppositions within the Arab arena.

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Perhaps the two countries will continue to improve this game in the throes of the international polarization in the region in order to attract support and material and spiritual assistance from their allies. The Soviets, for example, have promised to provide aid to South Yemen in the amount of \$750 million, while San'a' has received aid and Arab and Western promises for aid in amounts greatly exceeding this figure.

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EGYPT

EGYPTIAN OPPOSITION ABROAD ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 14-20 Mar 80 pp 30-34

[Article: "Egyptian Opposition Abroad: 'A Sword of Wood or a Sword of Iron?'; Gen Al-Shadhili Says: 'Goal Is to Bring Down the Regime and Build Democracy'; Opposition Abroad Asks: 'What Will Be Fate of Sinai if Sadat Falls?'; Why Have Egyptian Organizations and Prominent Personalities Refused to Cooperate with Opposition Front Abroad?; Will Arab Governments Agree to Deduct \$200 Million from Salaries of Egyptians that Work for Them?"]

[Text] Opposition abroad is not something new in the modern history of Egypt. It was already active at the beginning of the 20th century during the intensification of oppression by British imperialism and when the [royal] palace persecuted Egyptian nationalists and intellectuals. Now history is repeating itself. With the intensification of the Zionist-American assault on Egypt and its subjugation [of Egyptians] to the present regime, hundreds of prominent Egyptians, including intellectuals, politicians, and journalists, are emigrating and spreading all over the Arab world and even into a number of European countries.

Perhaps the most important landmark on the path taken by the Egyptian opposition abroad is its current orientation toward gathering its forces and crystallizing them into organizations. There are beginnings of groups trying to form an opposition front which would polarize the efforts and ideas of these leading personalities and organizations as well as more than a million Egyptians working throughout the Arab world.

But has this effort to form an opposition front started on the right track? Who are the prominent personalities and what are the organizations that will join it. Where does the financing come from? And what is the attitude of the Arab world toward it?

AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI is trying to answer these questions through an investigative study conducted by a number of its editors in Paris and its correspondents in the Arab world. It does not claim that the investigative study is a complete and comprehensive presentation of all of trends of

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the Egyptian national movement abroad. For this reason, it is prepared to provide space on its pages for any commentary, clarification, addition, or correction. Its first and foremost aim is to serve the cause of Egypt and to hasten to return it to the leading ranks of the Arab world. On February 6 of this year, the Egyptian People's Assembly held a tumultuous session which lasted more than 8 hours dedicated to "condemning and ridiculing" Egyptian writers and journalists working abroad. At the beginning of the session, Nabawi Isma'il, the minister of the interior, described [these writers and journalists] as "a few journalists, not more than 80 in number, who have defected from the profession of journalism. The degree of their servitude depends on the amount of money they receive."

Observers comment that the least that can be said of this official attack is that it was "disgusting," especially as it used "vulgar" language in referring to some of these journalists and writers.

In any case, no steps have yet been taken against any of the 329 journalists working abroad. They are part of a total of 1,785 journalists who are members of the union. But the mere fact that thought is being given to taking measures against approximately 80 journalists living abroad, who are regarded as opposed to the regime, means that their movement, their voices, and their opposition are reaching the ears of both government and public opinion in Egypt. It also means that their role is growing, mostly within the framework of political opposition organizations.

Consequently, the political activity of these journalists and writers is an integral part of the Egyptian opposition movement abroad. This movement has grown in magnitude to the point where it has become a matter of importance for Arabs in general, and a matter of disconcerting concern for the regime of President Sadat.

In this investigative study, AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI tries to touch upon the dimensions and activity of the Egyptian opposition movement, relying on large-scale follow-ups and inquiries which have been made by its correspondents in a number of the Arab capitals, in order to familiarize public opinion with one side of the growing opposition which President Sadat and his policies are facing [the other side is presumably opposition in Egypt itself].

Four Communist Parties

The first thing to attract one's attention when dealing with the existence of Egyptian opposition abroad are four communist organizations. This plurality of Marxist organizations derives from differences and disputes among them. These organizations are as follows:

1. The first organization calls itself "the Egyptian Communist Party." It is basically represented by some leaders such as Mahmud Amin al-'Alim, Michel Kamil and Adib Dimitri.

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In Paris the party has two publications. The first is seemingly for internal use, and is called "Democratic Papers." The second is a quasi-monthly magazine called "the Arab Left."

It is known that the original communist party was formed for the first time in Egypt in 1924, and that it was dissolved in 1927. It reappeared in the 40's until Nasser dissolved it in the 60's. Then it appeared again at the end of the 60's.

But the "Egyptian Communist Party" we are dealing with here was formed in June of 1975 by a group which had dissolved itself previously. This party is usually criticized for two things: its internal party line and its Arab policy. With regard to the internal aspect, the party was formed without consultation with any other force operating on the Egyptian arena.

In spite of its narrow base, it depends on some Marxist elements which split off from the "Rally Party" led by Khalid Muhyi-al-Din. With regard to its position toward President Sadat, the leadership of the Egyptian Communist Party stresses the cause of "national unity." Its analyses are based on the idea that Sadat's regime is a nationalist regime "which has been penetrated by rightist elements," that it represents "the right wing of the national liberation movement," and that it is a "regime of the national bourgeoisie against imperialism and the underdevelopment of the masses."

The leaders of the party consider the regime as consisting of three factions: the reactionaries, the indifferent, and the nationalists. It was not until after the Jerusalem visit [by President Sadat] that the party declared that the presidency had shifted over to the reactionary faction. Following "Camp David," the party adopted more hard-line positions.

On the pan-Arab level, the party's line seems extremely strange. It demonstrates open hostility toward the progressive nationalist line of the pan-Arab movement. It is for this reason, for example, that it never ceases to attack Iraq, which personifies this line. These attacks intensify or diminish according to the increase or the decrease of the disparity between higher pan-Arab nationalist interests and the interests of international Marxism and covert long-range Soviet aims in the Arab world.

Those who keep track of the Egyptian communist movement feel that the constant attacks of the leaders of the Egyptian Communist Party against Iraq's pan-Arab nationalist line show how far the Egyptian Marxists are from understanding the pan-Arab nationalist movement. They attempt to disregard the aspirations of the Arab nation to build a strong (federal) state to safeguard the fragmented Arab entities, because they feel that [fragmentation] in the end serves the interests of international Marxism. They feel that it would be easier for communism to swallow up fragmented entities than to swallow up or contain a unified, nationalist, pan-Arab entity.

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This attack waged by the Egyptian Communist Party against the pan-Arab nationalist line, perhaps falls in line with the attack waged by the Egyptian right, which basically disavows anything Arab in nature in Egypt.

Nevertheless, some of the leaders of this party owe their ability to stay in Paris to the Iraqi passports which they carry.

Thus, the Egyptian Communist Party in exile finds itself prisoner of two types of isolation: isolation from any popular base in Egypt, and isolation from the Arab world in general. The latter places it in clear opposition to the various factions of the pan-Arab nationalist movement.

2. The second Egyptian communist organization abroad is the "January 8 Egyptian Communist Party." This name refers to January 8, 1958 when various cells of the Egyptian communist movement united. This group rejected the decision to dissolve the party in 1964 at the request of the late President Jamal 'Abd-al-Nasir and on the recommendation of the party's central committee following the establishment of the Arab Socialist Union. It went underground when President Sadat took office.

It participated in the workers' strikes of 1971, in the student disturbances of 1972, in the students' and workers' riots of 1975, and in the riots of January 1977 in which it was actually the largest organization on the scene.

Unlike the Egyptian Communist Party, the January 8 Party is trying to rectify its course in two areas: coexistence in Egypt, and balanced relationships with the Arab nationalist organizations. In Paris, it publishes a magazine which is its organ and which is called "Solidarity."

The January 8 party does not spare any criticism of the leaders of the "Egyptian Communist Party." For example, in issue number 33 issued at the end of January, there was an article by Tahir 'Abd-al-Hakim in which he says: "There are some who forsook our people for many years. They participated in covering up for Sadat, while he was laying down the roots of his counterrevolution, on the pretext that his is a nationalist regime penetrated by rightist elements, or that his regime constitutes the right wing of the national liberation movement, or that his regime is democratic. With incomparable audacity, these people claim that they are the leaders of the Egyptian people, and that they have the right to determine who should enter the movement and who should stay outside of it. Who gave them this right? Nobody knows. What record of strife or intellectual contribution qualifies them to make this claim? Neither they nor anyone else can give an answer to this question. In the world of reality, no borrowed loudspeakers can give a group greater force than it has."

Another issue of "Solidarity," which was not dated, carried an article entitled "To the Permanent Secretariat of the Arab People's Congress: 'Enough manipulation of Egyptian representation.'" The article was in

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the same vein as that of the January issue. The secretariat referred to is a body which includes representatives of some Arab parties and is controlled by Libya.

The January 8 Party publishes a series of studies about Egypt. Up till now about five books have been published, including "The Game of the Fat Cats in Egypt" by 'Abd-al-Qadir Shahib, "Sadat's Path From Salzburg to the Knesset" by Tariq, and "The Camp David Peace" by Tahir 'Abd-al-Hakim.

3. The third opposition communist organization is called "The Egyptian Congress of the Communist Party." It was formed as a result of a big split in the ranks of the "Egyptian Communist Party," resulting in the separation of the majority of members from the leaders abroad. In Paris, this party distributes a publication called "Red Horizon." In issue number 6 of this publication, which is in the form of a booklet and which appeared in May of 1978, there was a very violent article against the "Egyptian Communist Party" entitled "Let us Crush the Chameleon of a Thousand Colors." It was followed by the subtitle: "Text of a Report by Comrade Khalid Ibn Al-Walid to the Central Committee of the Egyptian Congress of the Communist Party, Ratified by the Political Office As Expressing Its Position at the End of March 1978."

In a footnote on the first page of the report, there was the following definition of the Congress Party which gives an idea about its orientation: "The Egyptian Communist Party was formed by means of an opportunistic merger between the leaders of the Shuruq organization and the leaders of the two groups of the Democratic Movement for National Liberation. After some ideological, political, and organizational battles, the revolutionary cadres succeeded in snatching the leadership of the party away from the leaders [who were trying to liquidate it], and neutralized them. After purging the party, the new leaders gave it the name 'Congress'."

Although the footnote does not mention the number of killed and wounded in the "bitter ideological battles" between two communist parties, the rest of the report, as well as most of the writings of the "Congress Party" and the magazine "Red Horizon," pours on criticism of the previous course of the Egyptian Communist Party and its slogans, and exposes what it calls "its mistakes and its compromises." It must be said in favor of the Congress Party that it is present on the domestic scene more than it is abroad.

4. The fourth communist party is the "Communist Workers' Party." Recently this party issued a statement which included the names of 86 prisoners. Seventy-six of them members of the party, and only 11 are members of the Rally [Tajmi'] Party. It is clear that, by means of its statement, the "Workers' Party" is trying to give the impression that it is more popular than the "Rally Party," and that its members are filling the prisons.

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The fact is that this party, which was formed in 1968, leans to the type of intellectual and ideological argumentation which some neo-Marxists indulge in these days. The party is closer to the "new left," in terms of the extremism of its utterances and the slowness of its popular base. Nevertheless, it shares with the two previously mentioned parties a strong hostility toward the Egyptian Communist Party.

'Abd-al-Majid Farid and the Nasserite Line

If the communists have four parties which are quarrelling and fighting with each other, the Nasserites have only one homogeneous organization. It is known that the Nasserite trend has gained strength in Egypt among intellectual circles, especially with Sadat's retreat from the achievements and from the line of Nasser. The Nasserite organization which we have in mind here is the "Socialist Vanguard," which was founded by 'Abd-al-Majid Farid in 1979. Before that, 'Abd-al-Majid Farid had resigned from the presidency of the "Arab People's Congress," which has its permanent headquarters in Libya and is financed by Libya.

It is known that the Ba'th Party withdrew from this [congress] during its meeting in Aden last year.

Since the "Socialist Vanguard" aspires to become the most important opposition party outside of Egypt, we should point out that numerous factions and leading personalities [can be seen within] the Nasserite movement. Nasser did not leave behind him a tight organization, but rather a certain "climate" in which various factions developed.

The Nasserites who are organized to a certain degree inside Egypt belong to the "Club of Nasserite Thought," which is found in two universities: the University of Cairo and the University of 'Ayn Shams. The rest are leading personalities including the well-known journalist Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, whose activity at present appears to be limited to occasional writing for some Arab newspapers that are outside Egypt. He also writes books about the time when he was very close to the late Arab leader. But the doors to journalism inside Egypt have been closed to him since he was removed by Sadat from the position of chief editor of AL-AHRAM, which he had redeveloped and revived.

There is also the faction of 'Ismat Sayf-al-Dawlah, an intellectual faction which attracts some university students. It is based on several written works concerning Arab nationalism which show the extent to which the author is committed to Nasserite nationalist thought.

Previously, there was a Kamal Rif'at faction which was very close to Nasserism in its spirit and in its intellectual guidelines.

Besides this, the Nasserite movement outside Egypt is restricted to some organizations of students and intellectuals. The most prominent of these

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groups is one in Sweden. It puts out a semi-monthly publication called "The Nasserite." In the magazine's first issue, there is a presentation by the "League of Nasserite Unionist Arab Students," who publish the magazine, consider themselves to be independent of any regime, fight for the sake of developing pan-Arab awareness among [Arab] youth.

The first issue also includes the text of the "Intellectual Document of the Nasserite Movement in Egypt," which was published in October of 1976 after a series of meetings, the most important of which were "the First Intellectual Nasserite Meeting in al-Zaqaziq" held in July 1976, and "the Intellectual Nasserite Meeting" held in the months of September and October of 1976. The publication is distinguished by its pure, broad nationalist flavor and includes articles taken from the writings of great nationalist thinkers, the most prominent of whom is Mr Michel 'Aflaq, the secretary-general of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party.

In general, and in spite of some theoretical and organizational differences, the Nasserite movement inside and outside Egypt remains homogeneous and unified to a great degree. This is unlike the situation of the communist parties which are fighting each other.

Gen al-Shadhili and the Unification Efforts

In this atmosphere Gen Sa'd-al-Din al-Shadhili, who resides semi-permanently in Algeria, has undertaken a mediation effort to bring together the scattered Egyptian opposition abroad into a single platform. Having this in mind, he began a series of contacts. Al-Shadhili's efforts were quickly exposed to an operation of containment on the part of the Egyptian Communist Party. This drove other organizations, communist or Nasserite, away from pursuing the possibility of forming a broad coalition. What made things worse is the existence of what one could call an Algerian-Libyan rivalry to woo the "Egyptian National Front" before it is even born.

The fact is that the difficulties which face the October War hero can be boiled down to the following three points: the platform of the front, its current members, and the recent Algerian-Libyan moves.

The platform of the front has been summed up by Gen al-Shadhili as consisting of two planks: bringing down the regime and commitment to democracy. Actually these two goals have aroused, and continue to arouse, widespread controversy in Egyptian opposition circles abroad. This is because there is still no clearly defined substitute for the present regime.

Although it is true that the goal of bringing down the regime is one which all members of the Egyptian opposition abroad agree upon, there are other serious problems which remain to be settled. In one of the front's preliminary meetings held recently, one of those present asked: "How is it possible to defend the Sinai when it is wide open to reoccupation, if the Zionists so desire, in the event of a change in the regime?"

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- According to a statement by one of those present, Gen al-Shadhili's opinion was that it would be better to amputate a diseased limb to save the rest of the body, and that the General did not believe that Israel is either interested in or capable of crossing the canal, under any circumstances.

- Of course, a political question such as this cannot be easily resolved. This is because the theory that the regime takes precedence over territory arouses broad controversy, considering the fact that no regime can exist without territory. However, Gen al-Shadhili cannot be said to be giving up the Sinai, because it is possible to regain it if the Israelis reoccupy it.

- As for the second plank in the platform, which has to do with democracy, it is also a subject of give and take. Gen al-Shadhili, who was Egyptian ambassador to Portugal, has been greatly influenced by what happened in Portugal. He aspires to Egypt undergoing a democratic change along the lines of what happened in Portugal, that is, through plurality of parties and open elections. Those opposed to this idea answer that the Portuguese experiment ended up with the domination of the rightists. Does one want a repetition of this in Egypt? Democracy in Egypt cannot be turned over to those who took well-known [negative] positions toward the national and pan-Arab causes of the Egyptian people. But Gen al-Shadhili asserts that democratic traditions do have roots in Egypt, and that democracy is closer to the spirit of the times, particularly to the spirit of the Egyptian people.

- But what about the current members of the front? People who are well-informed about talks held concerning the formation of the Egyptian Opposition Front say that the Egyptian Communist Party was the first to endorse the ideas of Gen al-Shadhili, and thus imposed itself as a privileged member in it. The consequence of this was that the present front emerged as weak, including only the Communist Party as a member organization. Most or all of the other members are persons who are not rooted in organizations and hardly have any mass constituency in Egypt. There is, for example, Mr Hasan Fath-al-Bab, who is employed as a professor in Algeria and is considered to be the front's representative in that country. Then there is Dr Hikmat Abu Zayd and her husband. They are considered to be the front's representatives in Libya by virtue of the fact that they are employed there. In representing the front in Libya they were joined by Mr Muhammad Abu-al-Futuh, who was a broadcaster in Radio Cairo.

- The field of journalism is represented in the front by Dr Ghali Shukri, whom Gen al-Shadhili appointed as his roving press secretary. He has sent Shukri on special assignments to London, Paris and Damascus in order to make contact with some of the Egyptian intellectuals who are working in these capital cities.

- In view of the strong position of the Egyptian Communist Party in the front which is about to be set up, and in view of the ill will between this party

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and the other groups and organizations, Gen al-Shadhili has tried to patch up rifts and to widen the base of the front by bringing into it Egyptians who work in Arab countries besides Algeria and Libya.

Thus, the general is attempting to apply his liberal methods by making room to many groups to express themselves and gaining the good will of factions which are in disagreement with each other in principle.

But where would financial support for the suggested front come from? Dr Ghali Shukri is trying to dispel the notion of any financial relationship on the part of the front with either of these two Arab countries [Algeria and Libya]. He informed AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI that the financing operation will be undertaken by what he calls "Egyptian nationalist capitalism abroad."

Asked by AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI for clarification of what he means by "nationalist capitalism," he said that he means the "honest" Egyptian businessmen who operate abroad.

Anticipating doubts that it would be possible for a few Egyptian businessmen to finance the activities of the front, he says that he has decided to go on a tour of the Arab countries, including the Gulf countries, to try to convince them to deduct 10 percent of the salaries of all Egyptians working in them. This would be like the deductions made from the salaries of Palestinians. Dr Ghali is really enthusiastic about this idea of deductions, and says that the amount "deducted" would be enough to finance the activities of the front. He believes that it is a "reasonable idea."

At this point we must mention the fact that for this idea to become a reality, all of the Arab countries must "agree" to deduction of this amount of money from the salaries of the Egyptians working there. And they must agree to transferring the money to the front's treasury. This is something that will take a long time to achieve and is not compatible with Dr Ghali's enthusiasm. Bear in mind that the amount which he is asking to "deduct" is estimated at about 200 million dollars a year, if we estimate that the income of Egyptians working in the Arab world is 2 billion dollars a year.

The new front has decided to set up an institute in Paris. Dr Ghali says it will be an "institute for documentation and studies." He says that he personally will be in charge of it. Mr Tahir 'Abd-al-Hakim says that Gen al-Shadhili made him an offer to be the head of this institute, but that he declined.

The front has also decided, according to the authority referred to, to impose its supervision upon all covert and overt Arab broadcasts beamed to Egypt, and to coordinate such broadcasts through the "Institute for Documentation and Studies."

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One positive phenomenon attracting attention is the fact that most of the members of the Egyptian opposition abroad are orienting themselves toward forming centers for research and study. At the same time, these can become centers for attracting supporters, and, of course, for gaining moral and material support of their activities.

There is a center which has actually been founded by 'Abd-al-Majid Farid in London. In spite of all of this, those who follow the activities of the Egyptian opposition movement abroad say that the front still lacks the participation of basic organizations which are active in Egypt and abroad, particularly the Nasserite "Socialist Vanguard" and the communist "January 8 Party." It is also noticeable that some of the well-known Egyptians who live in Algeria, for reasons which are not clear, were shunned [by the front]. They include Yusuf Darwish. Some Algerian newspapers have apparently tried to repair this wrong by interviewing Darwish when the front held its last meeting.

Algerian-Libyan Rivalry

Is there really an Algerian-Libyan rivalry concerning sponsorship of the Egyptian Opposition Front? Or is there actually cooperation in adopting it?

Informed Egyptian sources tell AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI that there actually is a rivalry, and that it came out into the open during the meeting of the "International Intellectual Symposium On the Green Book" last October.

The conference was an occasion for appropriate Libyan government agencies to undertake to attract some of the Egyptians living abroad by luring them into participating in the symposium and lauding President Qadhafi's "Green Book." Qadhafi published it, as he says, in order to save the world through a third course--a substitute for the courses of capitalism and Marxism. It was not long before the idea of an Egyptian national opposition was brought up and [espoused] by a number of Egyptians who participated in the symposium and became very enthusiastic about the theories contained in the "Green Book."

"Rapid attempts were then made to induce over Gen al-Shadhili (because of what he represents in the way of status, respect, and an honorable national military past) to base his organization in Libya.

However, these attempts were thwarted by two factors. The first factor is a purely Libyan one. The Libyan president made a slip of the tongue which most members of the Egyptian opposition consider to be a grave accusation against the Egyptians. During one of his speeches, he became overwhelmed by emotion and scolded the Egyptian people, saying that they are "kneeling day and night in humiliation before the Jews."

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The second sign of [Algerian-Libyan] rivalry, is the fact that Algeria hastened to once again rally the leaders of the front, especially those who had begun to regularly visit Libya. Algeria offered them all of the necessary facilities to hold their constituent assembly meetings in the capital of Algeria. Algeria even hosted them in the Hotel "(al-Urasi)" which is the finest hotel in Algeria. Then, Algeria opened to them the doors of the Guests Palace for them to hold their meetings there. Usually, this Palace is not open to anyone except heads of state. Each of those who attended [the meetings] was provided with a luxury car, escorts, and bodyguards to protect his life.

This Algerian generosity was thought out in advance in all of its small details, and cannot be compared to Libya's hasty behavior. As a means of comparison, it is sufficient to point out one example of such behavior. 'Umar al-Hamidi, the secretary-general of the Arab People's Congress, came to Paris a few weeks ago and called upon the "members of the front" to meet with him, one by one. They refused to do this, because they considered that the invitation was extended in a haughty manner and was not proper. The only people who accepted the invitation were the members of the Egyptian Communist Party.

Speaking of this communist party's membership in the front, it has tried to [compete with it] by creating parallel bodies and organizations such as "the Congregation of Egyptian Nationalists Abroad," the founding of which was announced by the Egyptian movie producer Fu'ad al-Tihami in Beirut in February of 1979.

This is an overall, general picture--which the correspondents of AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI have tried to portray--of the steps taken by Egyptians abroad who are opposed to the regime of Sadat, as they grope for the beginning of the road.

But can these efforts polarize the efforts and ideology of all Egyptian leading personalities and organizations presently outside the country? Likewise, can they rally the hundreds of thousands of Egyptians who are spread all over the Arab countries?

This is the question which still faces those who are making the efforts--those who are feeling their way among scattered Egyptians, sharp contradictions, ideological disputes, and various affiliations and ties.

Perhaps AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI can say, without slighting any Egyptian abroad, that a real Egyptian opposition front abroad has not yet been born. We mean a front and an opposition in the real sense of the word, including close and organized contact with the opposition at home. We also mean a front which can present itself to international parties and organizations as a cohesive front established on solid ground and enjoying broad support from the masses at home.

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We are not trying to frustrate determination and ambition. But we consider that attempts at unification, coordination, and the setting up of "fronts and groupings" to be [mere preludes] to completing the great overall job of having a leadership enjoying the support of the masses of Egyptians abroad.

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MAURITANIA

ADDITIONAL DETAILS ON CNPF DELEGATION'S VISIT

Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 7 Mar 80 p 563

[Article: "A CNPF Delegation For Reinitiation of Bilateral Trade"]

[Text] As we briefly indicated last week, a delegation representing the National Council of French Employers [CNPF] headed by Jean Dromer, chairman of the ACP [African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries] committee of the CNPF and president of the BIAO [International Bank for West Africa], visited Mauritania from 19 to 22 February at the invitation of the Mauritanian Government.

Four committees (respectively, on the fishing industry; miscellaneous industries; transportation and trade; and agroindustry) have been formed to study and develop--within the framework of the priority decisions taken by the Mauritanian Government--cooperation based on respect for the mutual interests of the two partners.

During the initial working session between the two delegations, Mauritanian Minister of Industry, Mines and Commerce Cissoko Mamadou spoke first of the priority sectors of the Mauritanian economy: mining; fishing and fish processing; and small and medium-sized industry.

"Our strategy," Cissoko added, "is oriented toward small and medium-sized industry, which is better adapted to Mauritania's economic structure and conditions because it requires a relatively limited level of technology; because it is better suited to the requirements of our restricted markets; and because it carries out projects that are labor intensive, i.e., it creates jobs at relatively little cost. Private initiative finds in this formula a special incentive."

The minister then cited the principal features of the Code for Investments in Mauritania as set forth in the law of 16 March 1979 (see, in this connection, MTM [MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS] of 23 March 1979, p 741) and regulations pertaining to duty on transfers of capital.

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Mamadou Cissoko concluded by citing the reasons for the failure of industrialization in the past, to wit: conditions for investment that were not very attractive from the standpoint of taxation; requirements that were disproportionate to the economic realities of the nation; and the unequal conditions embodied in the provisions of certain protocols of agreement offered to Mauritanian businessmen.

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MAURITANIA

BRIEFS

FAO FISH RESOURCES AGREEMENT--Soumare Oumar, Mauritanian minister of fishing and marine economy, and Ben Khader, FAO resident representative in Nouakchott, signed on 19 February a draft fishery agreement whereby the FAO undertakes to help Mauritania develop its fish resources. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501] 10992

CNPF DELEGATION'S VISIT--A delegation from the National Council of French Employers (CNPF) consisting of 20 members and headed by J. Dromer, chairman of the ACP [African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries] committee of the CNPF and president of the BIAO [International Bank for West Africa], arrived on 19 February in Nouakchott to study--together with the Mauritanian authorities--the political, administrative and financial problems that may arise in connection with bilateral relations. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501] 10992

TEA SHORTAGES COMBATED--The National Import and Export Company (SONIMEX) has taken the measures necessary to avoid the tea shortages that recur periodically in Mauritania. In fact, the firm contracts for the purchase of tea that have been concluded by the company for 1980 delivery now total 3,450 tons, whereas this figure has not exceeded 2,950 tons in any previous year. Deliveries will be staggered throughout 1980, beginning in March. During 1979 SONIMEX sold 2,213 tons of tea, and its sales for the period September 1979-15 January 1980 totaled 552 tons. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501] 10992

KOUNDI AGRO-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX STUDIED--SCET [Central Company for Territorial Equipment] International and the companies grouped in ADRA (French Company for Rural and Agroindustrial Management and Development)--whose function is to supply key operations with skills--are studying the capability of the Koundi agroindustrial complex in Mauritania to produce at term approximately 40,000 tons of refined sugar. The contract--in the amount of 3.1 million French francs--is financed by the FAC (Aid and Cooperation Fund) and the CCCE (Central Fund for Economic Cooperation). [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501]

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MEASURES AGAINST UNAUTHORIZED CONSTRUCTION--Maj Moulaye Ould Boukreiss, Mauritanian minister of the interior, has explained the measures taken by the government to counter the construction--on the public lands of Nouakchott district--of structures that are frequently not in compliance with the safety regulations established in connection with city planning. The minister also announced that 8,000 homesites will be distributed in this district within from 6 months to 1 year. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501] 10992

JAPANESE GUELBS PROJECT LOAN--Ely Ould Allaf, administrator and general manager of the National Industrial and Mining Company (SNIM-SEM [expansion unknown]), on 3 February signed with the authorities of the Overseas Economic Fund of Japan a loan agreement to finance the Guelbs project in the amount of 3.6 billion yen (\$16 million). [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501] 10992

IRAQI AID--On 11 February Iraq donated to Mauritania a large quantity of articles of primary necessity (food and pharmaceutical products) having a total value of 1.5 million dollars. Iraq had already provided 3 million dollars worth of aid in late 1979. [Text] [Paris MARCHES TROPICAUX ET MEDITERRANEENS in French 29 Feb 80 p 501] 10992

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SYRIA

REACTIONS TO RECENT EVENTS ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 4-10 Apr 80 pp 27-29

[Article by AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI's Correspondent in Damascus: "What Senior Officers in Syria Told al-Assad; Disturbances Have Quieted Down, but Change Hoped for is Still Quite Remote"]

[Text] After the violent activities in Syria were abated last week, the government in Damascus took political action to establish a new mode of cooperation between the regime and the moderate political forces. This new Syrian action opened the file on the balance that exists between the power centers in the regime in the aftermath of the violent actions that prevailed in the north of the country. This action has again raised the following question:

Has the regime decided to carry out a new reform movement, or what is called a bloodless coup, following the practical warning that was delivered to it by the bloody events? These bloody events proved that closing the question of the Moslem Brothers was not going to put an end to the struggle if conditions in the government continued at a standstill and if the regime did not move towards the real elimination of [those phenomena] that citizens are complaining about.

It is evident in Syria that the power centers these days are making intense political efforts and are engaged in intense activities with President Hafiz al-Assad to keep the potion for change at a safe distance. Diplomatic sources in Damascus are saying that what happened in the last 2 months has produced new factors which al-Assad has been considering prior to making a decision on the new image which the government must assume if it wants to outlast the storm and establish a foundation of cooperation between the various forces which can withstand unrest.

Those diplomatic sources identify these new factors as follows:

First, the measures that have been undertaken by the government in Syria have assumed a course that leans towards the moderate forces, and especially towards the middle class Sunnis who outnumber the other groups

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in the big cities. The sources are saying that President al-Assad has raised import quotas 200 percent for the merchants of consumer goods, luxury items and automobiles.

This decision was made in the midst of the merchants' strike in the markets of the northern cities. It affirmed that the firm method paralleled the method of increasing benefits and producing more groups who benefit from the existence of the regime.

Informed sources are saying that because of the current situation the merchants considered these procedural measures [that were adopted] to strengthen the commercial sector to be tantamount to gains for them. The merchants think they must make an effort to strengthen these gains and to obtain more of them.

The Tactics of the Moslem Brothers

Second, the method of the Moslem Brothers' action was not identical to what the government had expected, nor was it identical to their method in future [sic?] years. Events in north Syria proved that the leaders of the Moslem Brothers were taking action in accordance with radical methods that are based on the escalation of violence in cities and on the establishment of solidarity with the ranks of citizens.

Syrian political circles are saying that this method enables the Moslem Brothers to take advantage of the calm period in cities that have had disturbances to increase their communications with citizens and to renew the violent confrontation at higher levels according to the principle of shocks. All citizens would thus get an equal share of the government's reactions.

This method of building a popular environment against the government has made the government apprehensive that there may be further acts of violence in the next 2 months. The purpose of present action, therefore, is to break the relationship between the Moslem Brothers and the citizens and to draw the citizens to the side of the government.

Third, the losses that resulted from the events in the north were not confined to loss of life--unofficial sources exaggerate their estimates of the losses and state that between 700 and 800 people were killed, whereas diplomatic sources estimate that between 150 and 200 persons were killed--but they went beyond that to economic losses which resulted from the disturbances that swept the markets and the industrial centers.

The events of the north also led some families from certain sects to emigrate from the cities to the coastal areas where these sects constitute a majority. Syrian sources state that about 600 families have emigrated recently from Aleppo to the areas of Latakia, whereas only 20 families remained in the city.

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It is known that most of these families had emigrated in the thirties from the district of Iskandarun which Turkey had seized from Syria. But despite their second migration, these people are being asked to focus on the necessity of truce negotiations for achieving continued coexistence and for preventing anyone who may be planning sectarian conspiracies.

Fourth, the events of north Syria have revealed the nature of the controversy that exists between the forces in the regime and the forces in the ruling party in particular even though these forces had come into existence to achieve the balance that is necessary in the hierarchy of the government and of the party. The controversy between these forces following the events in north Syria reached the point of exerting pressure to have certain factions banished [from the party].

The Role of Rif'at al-Assad

Diplomatic sources stated that President al-Assad had received a delegation consisting of Maj Gen 'Ali Duba, commander of military intelligence; Maj Gen 'Ali Haydar, commander of the special units; and Maj Gen 'Ali Aslan, commander of the Military College. This delegation came to al-Assad to ask that Col Dr Rifa't al-Assad be granted a period for rest so that he can resume his therapy which he had begun some time ago in Bordeaux and in Paris, France. He had been forced to interrupt his therapy and return to Damascus to welcome Algerian President Chadli Bendjedid during his recent visit to Damascus.

Rif'at al-Assad (41 years old) is President Hafiz al-Assad's younger brother. He began his professional life as a civil servant in the Syrian Customs. Then he joined the armed forces and built his [career] path in the special forces where he then formed forces that are known in Syria as "the defense companies." These are forces that are highly trained for urban combat. They are stationed in a principal way around Damascus and the principal cities.

Rif'at al-Assad played a principal role in the corrective movement that brought his brother, the minister of defense, President Hafiz al-Assad to the height of power in 1970. The movement ended with the banishment of the radical wing in the party and in the regime which was led by Salah Jadid. This occurred after Jadid lost his popular support.

Observers in the Syrian capital are saying that the fact that the regime has survived for 10 consecutive years has given Syria a kind of stability it had not known since the early days of independence in the mid forties. But as the regime now looks forward to the eighties, it finds itself suffering from an obvious overdistension that has limited its ability to take action and exercise initiative inside the country so as to carry out the reforms and the changes that seem to be necessary in the eyes of its allies and avoid the consequences of the unrest that it has faced recently.

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Opponents of the regime indicate their belief that the regime is incapable of carrying out these reforms and changes because of its structural makeup and because of the relationship that the power centers have with each other. Any change inside the regime, therefore, would seem to be more like a Ceasarean operation that the regime itself cannot perform.

The Way to Dispel Feelings of Bitterness

The change that is being called for and is sometimes openly discussed in Damascus is more than a mere purge in some administrative centers in the public sector. What is being called for is that the change encompass agencies and staff positions that have been responsible--and this is openly and implicitly acknowledged by the regime itself--for the bitterness which broad sectors of the citizens have been feeling.

Some parties in the government are apprehensive about the fact that having the Syrian armed forces surround the Syrian cities and arming the professional and popular associations and organizations would produce a reaction that would be quite contrary to the purpose behind this measure.

Political, party and popular circles are presently awaiting with patience the measures that the government will take regarding spreading a more democratic atmosphere in the country in the area of stimulating the progressive nationalist front and providing its parties with the opportunity to pursue their political and party activities without restrictions. [These parties would be able to] publish the newspapers that speak for them without censorship.

It is known that the front's charter does not allow parties that are allied with the ruling party to work within the army. This matter had been agreed to so as to spare the military establishment the consequences of party struggles. But the charter also deprives those parties of working in the labor sectors, and this seems unreasonable today.

The parties of the front themselves appear to be bloated. There is more than one organization with the same name. There is, for example, more than one Syrian communist party and more than one socialist union. Organizations that are outside the front describe themselves as the true organizations while describing some of the organizations within the front as parallel organizations that came into existence under the protection of the government and its agencies.

One of the leaders of the leftist organizations which are outside the front told me that all the political circles had welcomed the corrective movement which had been led by Hafiz al-Assad in 1970. The influence of the regime reached its peak during the October War, but the fact that it withdrew in its shell baffled the other political forces that had opened up to it. These forces soon found themselves gradually withdrawing, and the estrangement [between them and the regime] turned into hostility.

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This is because the regime waited too long to take advantage of the opportunities that were available to it to establish a full dialogue from which a deep and a broad democracy could have emerged. Such a democracy would not have presented any threat to the regime at that time.

The Syrian Rightist Movement

The economic openness policy helped stimulate certain commercial sectors to the point that civil servants resigned from their government jobs in large numbers to pursue commercial or brokerage activities with the participation of certain executive officers. Some of them realized tremendous commissions and profits that were not difficult to conceal in a country that is observant of and sensitive to such operations. Meanwhile, other sectors in their entirety were suffering from the floundering of the economic policy and the worsening bureaucracy and neglect. Besides, the unregulated openness [policy] had brought about an annual rate of 20 to 30 percent inflation that was particularly reflected in the housing sector. It became impossible to find rental housing, and housing that was available for sale was beyond the reach of the new generation of citizens whose income is limited.

Inflation was also reflected in the prices of food and basic food supplies, some of which are subsidized by the government. Inflation has made incomes quite inappropriate as the purchasing power of the Syrian pound declined.

Armed religious groups took advantage of the bitterness which is felt by the young generations who are still influenced by the traditions, customs and beliefs that they have inherited. Armed religious groups urged young people to carry out isolated hit and run operations which were then expanded to assume, as they did in the first half of last March, the character of confrontations in which wittingly and unwittingly popular sectors took part.

It is difficult for a visiting correspondent to be absolutely certain about whether or not the citizens are sympathetic to these armed groups. But it is evident that citizens in poor and densely populated urban centers are ignoring the activities of these groups to the extent that the government was recently finding it difficult to break into the strongholds of these groups because they were located in the centers of the popular quarters in Aleppo, for instance.

Has the regime now lost the opportunity to carry out the real change that is being called for?

Regardless of what the opponents of the regime think, it is the regime itself that can answer this question. It alone can determine whether or not there is a need for change; how far this change should go; when it should take place; whom it will affect; and how it will be carried out.

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The nature of the predictions and forecasts about what will happen in Syria depends on the extent to which the regime can effect change. Syria is that Arab country where events have a significant effect on the country's surroundings; events in Syria are also significantly affected by events that occur around it.

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SYRIA

DOMESTIC UNREST, GOVERNMENT'S REACTION ANALYZED

Paris AL-WATAN AL-'ARABI in Arabic 21-27 Mar 80 pp 18-19

[Article: "Looking at Syria Through a Peephole: Does the Washington-Damascus Road Pass by Aleppo?"]

[Text] It is in Damascus that the awe and power of the state are always concentrated regardless of the identity of the regime. The people of Damascus have always been known to be "the first to obey and the last to disobey."

It is for this reason that Damascus did not experience what the cities of North Syria experienced early this March. But Damascus kept one ear tuned to what had happened there, and it kept the other ear tuned to its southern battle lines. Damascus knows that it lies in the path of the front: it is only 45 kilometers from the first Israeli warning post in the occupied Golan.

The dangerous thing that happened did happen, as it usually does, in the north. But the ramifications this time were broader than those of the ordinary assassinations that official civilian or military figures or figures close to official authorities had been subjected to in the past few years.

A quick and guarded review of what did happen--this is because accounts are contradictory and the authorities have not issued any official bulletins--enables us to say that businessmen in Aleppo had rejected official measures to freeze prices and another decision to make substantial increases in the salaries of their employees and workers. They cited deteriorating economic conditions as an excuse.

Aleppo is the second largest city in Syria, with a population that at present amounts to about 2 million. Being centrally located between the areas of agricultural production in al-Jazirah in the east and on the sea coast in the west and the consumer markets in the south and perhaps [also] in the north where the 800 kilometer borders with Turkey are located, Aleppo has major commercial significance.

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Aleppo is a conservative city. In the forties and the fifties it was a closed electoral citadel for the rightist People's Party whose leaders are aristocratic and whose allies are devout Moslems and Christian big businessmen.

Besides its ancient Moslem majority and its Christian minority, which is no less ancient, Aleppo has minorities that had come to it from the surrounding countryside. It also has a large Armenian community and a community of refugees who had been evacuated from the province of Iskenderun which Turkey seized in the thirties. Most of those refugees are members of the 'Alawi sect.

The densely populated and poor popular residential areas in Aleppo had not been torn down and replaced with modern areas as had been the case in Damascus. These areas thus continued to maintain their traditions, and they remained to a large degree influenced by their religious climate which was suitable for the growth of extremist religious groups. This was happening at a time when the government, during the administration of Mr Salah Jadid in the sixties, was directing its attention to the pressure exerted upon it by the demands of liberal and intellectual groups and the middle classes.

The Beginning of the Clash

This introduction is inescapable so that the truth about what happened in Syria's second largest city may be understood. The merchants responded to the government's economic and labor decisions by going on strike in an atmosphere of tension with the government that had existed even before the incident at the artillery school and even before the recent assassinations to which a few theologians have been subjected. [This tension included] the government's intense prosecution of individuals, who belong to armed religious groups, and of ordinary citizens, especially in the popular districts where armed men seek refuge. Ordinary citizens are usually harrassed under these emergency measures.

The friction was enough to inflame the situation and to turn it into a general wave of violence in which some citizens--perhaps encouraged by the armed religious groups--unleashed their anger on public organizations and public buildings. This included the services facilities and especially public transportation vehicles.

The disturbances pervaded numerous districts and especially al-Sulaymaniyah, al-Kalasaah, al-Sakhur and Bab al-Nayrab. The government's response was also quick and violent, and many people on both sides were killed and wounded.

The tense atmosphere spread to the neighboring cities which also found themselves to be the scenes for acts of violence. This included the districts of Idlib, Khan Shaykhun, Sanl al-Ghab and even Hamah, a bustling, hardheaded city which has remained impervious to the government ever since the days of unity between Egypt and Syria in 1958-1961.

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A reporter visiting Damascus can come close to getting lost in such circumstances by trying to put his finger on the facts and the incidents amidst the exaggerations and the rumors that usually envelop events which take place 200 or 400 kilometers away. Accordingly he has to be satisfied with making guarded references to unconfirmed information about events that occurred in North Syria. These events were characterized by highway robbery, by the laying of ambushes and by the exchange of armed attacks in the villages of the countryside.

It has been confirmed, however, that the government did take action on two parallel courses. It waved an olive branch to the cities and quarters that had gone on strike by sending them a number of senior government and party officials who called for the restoration of calm, the opening of the striking shops and the elimination of tension. They promised they would take measures that would respond to the pressing and urgent demands of the citizens.

At the same time large military forces led by a major general in the army moved northwards. Some sources estimated that these troops had 10,000 soldiers. They included armored battalions that had been moved mechanically from special forces and defense companies. The latter are riot squads trained for urban combat; they are equipped with modern combat equipment and helicopters.

This military action is significant. The army in Syria has always been the symbol for national unity in a country where coexistence between its groups and sects is relatively affected by political changes, military coups, economic measures, ideological confrontations and administrative and political corruption.

If the military activity that turned towards the principal road from Damascus to Homs and then to Hamah and Aleppo were tantamount to a show of force, it was also a reminder that what happened in Lebanon--in the absence of a role for the army--cannot happen in Syria unless the unity of the army were to become unraveled. All observers here acknowledge that this would be difficult because of the nature of the structural makeup that controls the army and especially because of President al-Assad's personality. President al-Assad is respected by the military leaders and by the leaders of the strategic sectors, regardless of the bitter criticism that is directed against a few ranking members of the regime. This matter is not a secret here; in fact, the government does acknowledge it in the process of criticizing itself.

It seems that these dual measures were sufficient to calm conditions and to effect a gradual return to normalcy. Aleppo now has a suitable, new governor, Mr Nihad al-Qadi. He is Aleppo's third governor in less than a year, in this regard, Aleppo is like Hamah.

But the information that is available here indicates that the atmosphere is still tense. What increases the sensitivity of the al-Shahba' [luminous]

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City is the fact that most of the public organizations and buildings are scattered in a circle that surrounds its historic citadel which is located in the midst of the popular [residential] quarters and the old bazaars where the disturbances had erupted. Consequently, there are fears that friction may recur because the government is forced to keep troops on guard duty in the citadel and in the public organizations.

The Government Is Nervous and Tense

This may be the first time for the tension to move from the street to officials and to the government. The commentaries in Syrian newspapers appear to be nervous and menacing. The title of an editorial in one of the recent issues of the official newspaper TASHRIN [October] was: "Armed Revolutionary Violence To Oppose Reactionary Violence; the Aggressor Is Unfair."

Even President al-Assad himself whose oratorical tone has been subdued during the last 10 years of his government delivered six speeches in less than 10 days. They were characterized by threats that he would turn to "settling the accounts with the murderers."

Although he focused on his determination to arm the workers, the farmers, the young people and the students so they can defend their gains, and although steps have already been taken in this direction, observers here are saying that the principal material force which the regime will continue to rely on in [any] domestic confrontation will be that of the armed forces. This is especially because the process of arming civilian organizations is a double edged sword: it may harm as much as it may benefit. It may lead to bloody confrontations since the government knows that weapons have been infiltrated to other civilian groups, especially in the last 2 years.

But the outstanding matter that attracted the attention of observers here is the fact that President al-Assad and the official media have focused on holding the United States and its aides, the Israelis and the Phalangists, responsible for what is happening in Syria. President al-Assad believes--and his speeches indicate this--that he is paying the price for his position against the Camp David conspiracy.

Syrian Strategy

Now that the terrain for the occasional outbreak of disturbances has been expanded, the regime has discontinued its criticism of itself. It is inclined to blame the disturbances on foreign agitators, and especially on the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Syrian political circles believe, however--and party circles share this belief--that the regime must tie the past process of self-criticism with more radical and firmer measures to remedy [those phenomena] that the

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regime is complaining about and those about which many groups of citizens are [also] complaining.

At any rate the regime has adopted a new strategy in its confrontation with its present enemy, the United States.

* It will intensify the security campaign to keep track of those who are aiding the United States inside the country, and it will endure the consequences of all the hardships and anxieties that ensue for the ordinary citizen.

And here many observers and press agency correspondents are wondering whether the road between Washington and Damascus does actually pass through Aleppo or Hamah as the regime is suggesting it does by referring to "the American connection" in what happened there recently.

* The regime will carry out a partial, considered withdrawal from Lebanon that would make it possible for the Syrian forces to take up defense and combat positions instead of their scattered "policing and security" positions which they used to take up in the past.

It is the opinion of Damascus that this operation will embarrass the United States and will hold it responsible for the deterioration of the security condition in those areas from which the Syrian troops will have withdrawn.

* The regime is to challenge the Israelis who had hinted more than once that they would undertake military action against Syria through South Lebanon. President al-Assad has personally announced that Syria was prepared for the confrontation, that it had 3,000 tanks and that it was capable of mobilizing 1 million soldiers.

Observers here think that President al-Assad's regime does not seem to be apprehensive about such an operation because this will help the Syrians to a large extent forget what is disturbing them on the domestic front so as to confront their Israeli front.

* The regime is to show far-reaching reliance on the Soviet Union in supporting the defense and political capabilities of Syria. It is to praise the Soviet Union publicly in official statements and in commentaries in the media.

Although observers are pointing out that Syria's rapprochement with the Soviet Union is not new and that it dates back specifically to President al-Sadat's initiative when he went to the Knesset, this rapprochement has been intensified at present. This [development] comes at a time when Damascus is finding itself at odds with more than one Arab party; it is coming at a time when the burdens of Damascus in Lebanon are growing and its domestic front is tense. The regime is facing enemies who are

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believed to be working for the United States or for Arab parties friendly with the United States.

But has this rapprochement with Moscow caused President al-Assad to lose the flexibility that he used to have and that he skillfully and efficiently took advantage of in building his Arab and international relations and friendships throughout the years of his government?

Perhaps, but at any rate no regime is always free to choose its cards.

This is the gossip in Damascus that a visitor hears during his first days in the city; or this is what a visiting observer may conclude from the view that appears to him through the peephole of Damascus.

It is a picture that cannot be completed in a few days, especially since there is much gossip in Damascus, [a city] which has many surprises for its visiting correspondents who are looking for valuable news and secrets.

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WESTERN SAHARA

PARIS MAGAZINE VIEWS POTENTIAL SAHARA FIGHTING

LD181451 Paris JEUNE AFRIQUE in French 9 Apr 80 pp 22-23 LD

[Article by "R.M.": "What Is at Stake"]

[Text] The fighting between the Royal Armed Forces and the Saharan guerrillas from 27 February through 11 March took place in a region of vital importance for the parties engaged in the conflict--Morocco on the one hand and Algeria and the POLISARIO on the other. Roughly, it took place in the Tindouf/Tan-Tan/Assa triangle situated within--to use a stock phrase--Morocco's "internationally recognized" borders. This region already is and in the coming months or weeks, will become even more obviously the principal theater of confrontations in which not only the POLISARIO's future but also Morocco's territorial integrity will be at stake.

Fish in Water

Morocco seems to have discovered with surprise that it has a southeast region, even though ever since 1976 many officers have been trying unsuccessfully to draw the authorities' attention to its special importance. Its occupation by the POLISARIO (especially the occupation of La Hamada de Tindouf) has been a development of major significance for Algeria--it has created a protective buffer which physically prevents any threat of a Moroccan coup against Tindouf. It is of special interest to Algeria that the POLISARIO take the fortress of Zag in which an impressive Moroccan army is stationed with no natural obstacle between it and Tindouf. If negotiations were to take place between Morocco and Algeria tomorrow, the former could hardly pretend that it was making any concession by relinquishing its old claims with respect to Tindouf if it were not exerting any control over the region west of there.

For the POLISARIO, the Tindouf/Tan-Tan/Assa triangle is of fourfold interest--logistic, ethnic, military and political. From a logistic viewpoint, the Tindouf La Hamada Saharan bases directly back onto Algeria, whose borders are at no point more than a few dozen kilometers away. If the POLISARIO lost control over La Hamada, it could no longer

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get into southern Morocco except through the Fom al-Acher pass north of Tindouf, which the Moroccans could easily control. In the military sphere, the western boundary of La Hamada is situated at an ideal altitude for shelling any convoy trying to reach Zag through the Tighzert Valley, whose other side is dominated by the Ouarkiz mountain range where POLISARIO commandos are also deployed....

Ethnically, the region has traditionally been inhabited or traveled over by the same tribe which supports the POLISARIO--the Reguibet Cherk. And, finally, political interest. By settling in--or threatening--an inhabited region, the POLISARIO hopes to achieve an objective which any guerrilla would pursue but which it has so far been unable to achieve--living among the civilian population like fish in water. From this viewpoint, occupation or, at least, freedom of movement in the Ouarkiz Djebel is of major importance. The front has created a kind of underground resistance area there from which it organizes raids and attacks against the more densely populated northern region (Assa, Akka and Tan-Tan) and threatens Goulmine and Ouazazate. True, this region is inhabited by the Ait Oussa tribes, the Reguibet tribes' traditional enemies, but like all border populations, the Ait Oussa could go over to those who terrorize them.

The Moment of Truth

It seems that the POLISARIO intermittently controls the only transit points accessible to vehicles--Touizgui Remz, Ngueb and Khank al-Braber. The remaining points (a dozen) can be negotiated only by camels and men. A few centers of guerrillas, few in number but dangerous, are situated in Ouarkiz Djebel. In fact, the Moroccans have to fight in a long corridor lying in a trough surrounded by hills occupied by the enemy.

The POLISARIO has been sufficiently self-assured to settle some 4,000 combatants and their families, that is, some 8,000 people, on the plateau. With a rudimentary infrastructure--schools and infirmaries.... In fact, the front has assembled there its best trained and most highly motivated soldiers. All that remain of authentic combatants, natives of former West Sahara, have been concentrated there. Thus, the POLISARIO has "liberated" a region which it does not claim as its own....

As for the territory which it does claim (Saquia al-Hamra and Oued Dahab), the POLISARIO now sends there only poorly trained and unmotivated guerrillas recruited in Mali, Niger and Mauritania. As demonstrated by the recent attack against Boujdour (on 13 February), these men, who number some 7,000, fight very ineffectively. The Moroccan strategy of mobile columns has considerably reduced their freedom of movement. However, it has failed to draw the best POLISARIO troops toward Oued Dahab where the Ohoud [a Moroccan task force] started its offensive in order to relieve the northern region.

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In the end, a battle decisive for the future of West Sahara could well take place in the Tindouf/Tan-Tan/Assa triangle. Obviously, Algeria and the POLISARIO, whose interests in that border region are identical and which have closely coordinated their strategies there, are determined to inflict a Dien Bien Phu on the Moroccans, who could hardly tolerate any partitioning of their country. It is undoubtedly to put an end to indecision with respect to plans and blunders in their execution that, we have reason to believe, Hassan II decided to entrust Gen Ahmed Dlimi with responsibility for waging a war which is getting dangerously close to the Algerian border. Dlimi realizes that he has to deal with Algeria. He has not tried to make any of those subtle distinctions between a "moderate" Chadli and a "hard line" Yahiaoui so favored by "Algeriologists." Many observers believe that the moment of truth has come. The latest military developments have made the scale of the war clear--it is and has always been an Algerian-Moroccan conflict. The Sahara problem can no longer be confined to Sahara....

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